Dr. *THOMAS's*

SERMON

Preached before the Honourable

Houſe of Commons

On *Wedneſday*, *January* the 30th, 1744.

Jovis, 31 Die Januarii, 1744.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this Houſe be given to the Reverend Dr. *Thomas*, for the Sermon by him preached yeſterday before this Houſe, at St. *Margaret's Weſtminſter*; and that he be deſired to print the ſame; and that Mr. *Godolphin*, and Major General *Onſlow*, do acquaint him therewith.

N. HARDINGE,
Cl. Dom. Com.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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A

SERMON

Preached before the Honourable

Houſe of Commons

AT

St. *Margaret's* Weſtminſter

On *Wedneſday*, January 30. 1744.

BEING

The Day appointed to be obſerved

As the Day of the

Martyrdom of King *Charles* I.

By *JOHN THOMAS*, D. D.
Reſidentiary of St. PAUL's, and Chaplain in Ordinary to HIS MAJESTY.

LONDON:
Printed for W. INNYS in *Pater-noſter Row.*
MDCCXLV.

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Preached before the Honourable

House of COMMONS

AT

St. Margaret's Weſtminſter

On Wedneſday, January 30, 1741.

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MDCCXLI.

1 Cor. x. 11, 12.

Now all these things happen'd unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

IT appears from several Passages in this Epistle, that the Persons, to whom it was address'd, began to discover a Spirit of Pride and Contention; to value themselves more upon the extraordinary Gifts, which were then vouchsaf'd, than was consistent either with Peace or Charity; and to be more intent upon those *temporary* Privileges, than the *lasting* Duties of Christianity.

THE Apostle therefore, in order to check the Growth of this fatal Error, and to excite their Diligence and Watchfulness in their Christian Course, which he had just before with great Force and

Beauty compar'd to a Race; lays before them the Caſe of the *Iſraelites*, the many Privileges and Advantages which they had enjoy'd; and then obſerves, which was the Point he had in View, that, notwithſtanding all this, they miſcarry'd.

THE *Jews* were God's peculiar People, favour'd by him, for wiſe and ſpecial Reaſons, in a particular Manner; but yet, as the Apoſtle adds, *with many of them God was not well pleaſed, for they were overthrown in the wilderneſs: Now theſe things were written for our examples*, that we ſhould not be careleſs and ſecure. Whatever Favours or Bleſſings, in order to carry on the Ends of his Providence, God may confer on any People or Nation, He is, ſtrictly ſpeaking, *no reſpecter of perſons*; and he alone, who *fears* him, *and works righteouſneſs, will be* finally *accepted with him.*

THE Apoſtle goes on to caution them againſt ſome of thoſe particular Sins, into which the *Jews* had fallen, and then reſumes this important Advice: *Now all theſe things happen'd to them for examples* to Poſterity, *and they are written for the Admonition* of us Chriſtians: *wherefore let him that thinketh he ſtandeth*, which prov'd ſo dangerous an Opinion to the *Jews*, *take heed leſt he fall.*

THE Sacred History has this in common with Prophane, that it is design'd for the Instruction of Posterity; and when we meet with any remarkable Events in either, we may conclude that they were written for the particular Notice and Admonition of Mankind.

THE Return of this Anniversary obliges us to call back to our Thoughts a very extraordinary and interesting Event in our own History; an Event, full of useful Knowledge to all Orders and Degrees of Men, from the Highest to the Lowest: and that we may be the Better, as well as Wiser for this Enquiry, let us carry it on, with a View, not of reviling others, but of improving ourselves.

WHEN we look into the Annals of those Times, it seems natural to observe, that a Foundation was laid for the Difficulties and Troubles of this Reign in the preceding one; and that whatever Prince had succeeded to the Crown, would probably have found it very uneasy upon his Head.

KING *James* receiv'd the Kingdom from Queen *Elizabeth* in the most flourishing State, but left it to his Son neither in Peace, nor Plenty: An unnecessary War, and an exhausted Treasury,

could not but greatly embarraſs his Government; and had a plain Tendency to draw him into thoſe illegal Methods of raiſing Money, which proved ſo fatal.

IT was indeed, on many Accounts, a Misfortune that he ſucceeded King *James*. One of the chief, no doubt, was this, that That Monarch ſeems to have ſtretch'd the Prerogative beyond what had been known in *England* ſince the Reign of *Richard* the Second. This Prince endeavour'd to carry it ſo far, as to ſet up a Right of acting directly contrary to the Law, and loſt his Crown in the Attempt. Beſet with theſe Snares and Difficulties King *Charles* came young to the Throne, when his Paſſions were ſtrong, when Power is generally moſt agreeable, becauſe the Danger attending the Exerciſe of it is not well underſtood, or well conſider'd; and therefore when it was more eaſy and natural to tread in ſome of his Father's arbitrary Steps.

IT is doubtleſs greatly to be wiſh'd, that he had govern'd, for ſome of the former Years of his Reign, in a ſtricter Conformity to the Laws: The exacting the Five Subſidies with the ſame Rigour, as if an Act of Parliament had paſs'd to that Purpoſe; and the committing thoſe to Priſon who refus'd to pay it; the frequent and abrupt Diſſolution of Parliaments; the New Schemes

which were every Day ſet on foot for raiſing Money, and the Commitments attending the Refuſal to pay Money rais'd in ſo extraordinary a manner; the Language of the Proclamation by which the Parliament, in the fourth Year, was diſſolv'd; and, to mention nothing more, the Project of Ship-Money, were Grievances ſufficient not only to raiſe and juſtify the Fears and Jealouſies of the People, but their Endeavours likewiſe to redreſs them in a Legal and Parliamentary Way.

For all theſe Irregularities in Government the Neceſſity of the King's Affairs has been pleaded, which, if admitted to be the true Reaſon, is certainly not a good one; for in this Caſe, illegal Methods of ſupplying Neceſſities are a ſure Way, as was afterwards ſadly verify'd, to increaſe them.

But then it is but Juſtice to the Memory of this unhappy Prince, to take a View of him in another, and more favourable Light, as endeavouring to heal the Breaches that had been made, and as liſtening with the greateſt Attention and Concern to the Complaints of his Subjects: He own'd he had made an ill Uſe of his Power, and lamented it; was ready and deſirous to repair the Miſchief that had been done; and proteſted that his Intention was to govern, for the Time to come,

come, according to the Laws of the Land: He gave up thoſe Branches of the Prerogative which were moſt likely to be made an ill Uſe of; and denied nothing that could be aſk'd, not only to ſecure the Liberties and Rights of the Subject, but to allay the Fears of loſing them.

Ship-Money was taken away by Act of Parliament, in the fulleſt and moſt ſatisfactory manner; Monopolies, the High Commiſſion Court, the Star Chamber were given up; the Council Table regulated and reſtrained; the Foreſts limited; Triennial Parliaments, nay a perpetual one, granted; for the King paſſed an Act, empowering the Parliament to ſit as long as they ſhould judge neceſſary. And theſe Conceſſions were made at the Beginning of the Troubles, and conſequently before his Affairs could be ſaid to oblige him to make them.

THE * noble Hiſtorian makes this Reflection upon the ſeveral Acts, which had paſſed in ſo ſhort a Time for the Eaſe and Security of the Subject, " That they will be acknowledg'd by " an incorrupted Poſterity, to be everlaſting Mo- " numents of the King's Princely and Fatherly " Affection to his People; and ſuch an Obliga- " tion of Repoſe and Truſt from his Majeſty in " the

* Vol. I. Book III. p. 225, Fol. Edit. *Clar.* Hiſt.

"the Hearts of his Subjects, that no Expreſſions "of Piety, Duty, and Confidence from them "could have been more than a ſufficient Return "on their Parts."

BUT it has been, and is ſtill, objected that the King was not ſincere in any of his Profeſſions and Declarations to his People; that he had an Affection for Lawleſs Power, and an Intention to introduce it. An * Hiſtorian, who has diſcover'd no Partiality for the King, would not go thus far, and declares, that he believes it ſomewhat raſh to affirm that *Charles* the Firſt was not ſincere in his Profeſſions. As this is evidently the uncharitable Side of the Queſtion, we ſhould not lean to it; and ſhould ſuffer all thoſe ſtrong Appearances and Reaſons, which there are to the contrary, to have their juſt Weight.

IT is remarkable that ſome of thoſe, who moſt violently oppos'd the King's Meaſures at the Beginning of the Parliament in 1640, ſaw Reaſon to alter their Conduct, and choſe afterwards to ſhare his Fate: Even the excellent Lord *Falkland*, a Friend to Liberty, and a Lover of Mankind, was not aſham'd to be of this Number: What Account then is to be given of the Part they acted? The natural and obvious Way of Reaſoning ſeems

* *Rapin*, Vol. II. p. 523.

ſeems to be this, that all juſt Foundation of Diſtruſt and Jealouſy being taken away, their End in oppoſing him was anſwered, and therefore their Oppoſition ceas'd: They, it is reaſonable to believe, thought the King ſincere; or ſhould we ſuppoſe any Diſſatisfaction with regard to him remaining, it is plain they were more diſſatisfied with the People, who, they ſaw, were running into ſuch Extremities, as muſt in the End deſtroy all Order and Government.

LET us, however, admit for the preſent, that the King was not to be depended on, that their Diſtruſt of him was well grounded, and that all his Profeſſions were the Effects of Fear or Diſtreſs, and not of any real Concern for his Subjects: What Conduct would a true Love of our Country dictate in ſuch a Caſe? Surely rather to make trial of the King, than to ruin the Conſtitution: Was the throwing the Kingdom into *certain* Confuſion, becauſe the King's Conduct was *doubtful* (for more it could not then be) a reaſonable Meaſure? The beſt Time to redreſs Grievances was, when the Conſtitution ſtill ſubſiſted, and was entire; but, under the Pretence of reforming what was wrong, to deſtroy thoſe Powers, which alone could conduct this Reformation in an effectual Manner, was unnatural and abſurd.

THERE

THERE could have been no real Danger in making this Trial: If the King had return'd to any of thoſe Meaſures which he had condemned and given up, ſuch a Proceeding could not have added any real Strength to the Royal Cauſe; nay, it muſt have weaken'd it by cooling and diſguſting its Friends. This way of arguing ſeems fair and natural with reſpect to thoſe who deſigned nothing more than Redreſs of Grievances: And I would add, that, if we ſuppoſe them meaning ſomething more, and even bent upon a Change in the Government, this Argument will have its Force here likewiſe, becauſe a Relapſe into arbitrary Meaſures, muſt greatly have facilitated their Deſigns.

At laſt, which gave Occaſion to this Day's Humiliation, they removed the Object of their Hatred and Averſion, and with a Mixture of Mockery and Solemnity, condemn'd and executed their King. But was the Face of Things changed for the better? Were the Lives or Eſtates of Men more ſecure than they were before? Were not Both more precarious than ever? Were not Both taken away in the moſt inſolent and arbitrary manner? New Courts of Judicature were erected; continual Inſults were put upon Juſtice; and the Laws, as they had been formerly in *Rome*, were overthrown by the Violence

lence of the Sword: Unheard-of Taxes, which was the King's unpardonable Crime, were impoſed; and they, who had watched the Royal Steps with ſo much Attention and Jealouſy as to this Point, did not bluſh to exact *Compoſitions* for *Delinquency*, and made as free with Civil Property, as they had done with that Government which ſhould have protected it.

THUS fantaſtical and viſionary did their Dream of Freedom and Happineſs prove! Their Reign was ſhort and unquiet, they were perplex'd and bewilder'd in their own Meaſures, and the longer they thought upon what had paſſed, they grew more and more dejected and timorous; for there is a Weight in Guilt, that can ſink the ſtrongeſt Spirits.

BUT before I finiſh this Narrative, it will be very proper and inſtructive, to conſider this pious Prince in one View more, in the concluding Scene, and in his laſt Moments. Here, *without all Diſpute*, his Character ſhone with a peculiar Luſtre; and whatever Faults may be imputed to his Life, his Death was truly exemplary: When we obſerve the Firmneſs and Dignity, the Patience and Reſignation, the *Gentleneſs* and Charity of his Deportment in this trying Juncture; when we behold him preſer-

preſerving, and even adorning his Character, as a King, and as a Chriſtian; neither ſullying the Brightneſs of the former by any mean Condeſcenſions, nor departing in the leaſt from the Meekneſs and Simplicity of the latter by any angry and uncharitable Reproaches: I ſay, when we ſee him ſuffering a Death, attended with ſo many diſguſting, and even ſhocking Circumſtances, with ſuch a perfect Calm and Serenity of Mind; theſe Conſiderations ſurely muſt be ſufficient to ſoften Men's Reſentments. Here, it is ſaid, his greateſt Enemies relented; it was a very natural Concluſion, that a Perſon, who knew ſo excellently well how to die, could not be unfit to live.

THUS have I taken a ſhort View of the Riſe and Progreſs of thoſe Troubles, which gave Occaſion to this Day's Solemnity: To lay open the ſeveral Springs and Movements, that were employ'd in an Affair ſo various and complicated, would be a fitter Subject for an Hiſtory than a Sermon: However, this imperfect Account may furniſh us with ſeveral Leſſons of Inſtruction.

ONE very natural Uſe to be made of this Anniverſary is, to admoniſh the Friends to Liberty, and to convince them, that they are never in greater Danger of loſing it, than when

they attempt to enlarge it by irregular, and precipitate Meaſures: The Times, we have been ſpeaking of, will abundantly ſupply us with Proofs of the Juſtneſs of this Reflexion! There is more equal Liberty to be enjoy'd under our own excellent Conſtitution, than under any Form of Government whatever; for it partakes of the Advantages of them all, and is ſo wiſely and happily temper'd, as not eaſily or ſuddenly to be expos'd to the Inconveniencies of any: It has been tried, and has anſwer'd; and we cannot but remember with what Eagerneſs and Impatience, after having for ſome Years known the Want of it, this Nation returned to it again.

IT will therefore always be a neceſſary Point of Wiſdom and Prudence, which we learn from this Hiſtory, to examine narrowly into the Pretenſions and Views of thoſe Men, who undertake at any time to defend our Liberties; becauſe this was the Pretence in the Times we have been looking back upon, and becauſe, under this Pretence, they were deſtroy'd.

WHENEVER a Zeal for Liberty is not attended with a virtuous and religious Behaviour, it is, I believe, *generally* to be ſuſpected. He, who is a real Friend to the Liberties of Mankind, will always oppoſe Vice, the great Tyrant and Enſlaver;

Enſlaver; and will conſtantly maintain this Truth, upon which the Happineſs of his Country muſt neceſſarily depend, That Liberty and Virtue are inſeparable; and that He, who would divide them, is an Enemy to Both.

ANOTHER very material Uſe to be made of this Part of our Hiſtory is, to caution and warn the People, how they contract and indulge a ſettled Jealouſy and Diſtruſt of their King. Several Artifices were uſed, in the Times we ſpeak of, to raiſe and foment this Diſtruſt; and all Endeavours were ſet on foot to leſſen the Number of That Party, the only Juſtifiable and Wiſe Party, who were for ſtopping at the Redreſs of Grievances. All this Induſtry and Activity proceeded, as appear'd too late, from private Views, and not from any conſiſtent or uniform Love of their Country.

THE Calamities of thoſe Times cannot ſurely but convince the officious, the unprovok'd Sower of Sedition, how hurtfully he is employ'd, who merely out of *Caprice*, or becauſe he has the Spleen, or becauſe he fancies he is not enough conſidered, ſcatters his Poiſon. There is the greateſt Injuſtice and Cruelty in thus robbing a Prince of the *Hearts* of his Subjects, which are, without all doubt, the moſt valuable Branch of the Revenue.

A THIRD

A THIRD Uſe to be made of this Solemnity, and which very naturally ariſes from it, is, to conſider well the unhappy Situation of the Members of a Community, when the Government of it is diſſolv'd; and conſequently to learn the Wiſdom of ſetting a juſt Value upon the Benefits and Bleſſings of Government. Wiſe and proper Reſtraints are neceſſary to make us happy; and juſt as much as any Man frees us from thoſe Reſtraints, he will contribute to our Miſery. We are more indebted to Government, than is eaſily imagin'd, for reſcuing us from ourſelves; and whoever obſerves (and who is there that does not obſerve?) that Spirit of Abuſe and Licentiouſneſs which univerſally prevails, will ſee Reaſon to rejoice, that the Laws are a Fence about his Life and Property.

AND if Government is thus eſſential to our Peace and Happineſs, we ſhould cultivate in ourſelves, and promote in other Men, a dutiful Diſpoſition towards it: The Difficulties, as well as the Importance of it, require this at our Hands; for Government, after all our Indulgence and Propenſity to eaſe it, will be a laborious Work.

THERE is, I believe, no manner of Doubt, but that many of the Perſons who engag'd at firſt againſt the King, preſerv'd their Duty and Loyalty

alty towards him; and ſet out with no other View, but that of reſtoring the Conſtitution to Health and Vigour: The Event, we know, did by no means anſwer; and the Conſtitution, inſtead of gaining any new Strength, was thrown into Convulſions, and ſoon expir'd.

AFFAIRS of this nice and delicate Nature ſhould be conducted with the moſt exact Skill, and with the ſtricteſt Integrity: The Perſons, who are concern'd in them, ſhould go no farther than Prudence and Juſtice will allow; and ſhould not take any one Step, that is manifeſtly wrong, upon the vain Proſpect of ſatisfying unreaſonable Men.

THE Wiſe and Good, who at the Beginning of Difficulties generally have their Weight, ſhould remember, that when the publick Diſtraction comes upon them, they are always born down by the Noiſy and Factious. The Former therefore ſhould, in a very particular Manner, be careful how they aſſiſt the Latter in bringing about that Confuſion, which is always moſt favourable to the Deſperate in Principle and Fortune.

THE Wiſe and Virtuous are likewiſe caution'd by this Hiſtory, how they engage with Bad Men, even in a Good Deſign, which, by paſſing thro' their Hands, is apt to contract ſome impure Mixture;

ture; and is often ſo diſguis'd and alter'd, that the Wiſe and Virtuous can have no more to do with it.

I SHALL ſuggeſt no farther Reflexions upon this Subject; but ſhall conclude with this Exhortation, That we ſhould endeavour to avert the Divine Diſpleaſure for this, and all other National Guilt; for our Immorality and Prophaneneſs, for that Scorn of Religion, for that Contempt of the Authority both of God and Man, which ſo unhappily diſtinguiſh the preſent Age, by unfeigned Sorrow and real Amendment. *For theſe Things the Wrath of God* is kindled, and there is no other Way of extinguiſhing it, but by a juſt Senſe and Practice of our Duty.

IT is a very dangerous, as well as reproachful Situation of Mind, to be eaſy and indifferent when God is angry: If his Judgments cannot awake us, the Lethargy is far gone; or we are arriv'd at that Contempt of them, which muſt, if perſiſted in, be our Ruin.

LET us then, *in this our Day*, know and purſue *the Things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes!* Let us, by Simplicity of Manners and Integrity of Heart, by Induſtry and Contentment in our proper Callings, by Care and Watchfulneſs over ourſelves, by Good-will and

and Love to Men, by a just Zeal for our invaluable Constitution in Church and State, by Duty and Loyalty to our most gracious Sovereign; but, above all, by Piety and Devotion towards God, engage that Favour and Protection, which, whatever Difficulties may arise in the present unsettled Course of Things, will be our best Security.

In a word, Let us *turn unto the Lord* our God, though our Iniquities have justly provoked him; for *he is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil: Who knoweth*, if, upon our unfeigned Humiliation and Repentance, *He will return, and repent, and leave a Blessing behind him?*

FINIS.

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